



HEADING HOME: MINNESOTA'S PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS 2016-2017



LETTER FROM GOVERNOR DAYTON

Two years ago, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness adopted a set of strategies and goals to improve housing stability for all Minnesotans. Since then, we also have invested more than \$250 million in affordable housing, leveraging millions in local, private, and federal funding. These investments include over \$71 million to projects for people experiencing homelessness, which will result in more than 650 new housing opportunities.

I am proud to report that these strategies and new investments are making a difference for Minnesotans at risk of homelessness. Since 2014, we have reduced homelessness by 10 percent statewide and 17 percent for families with children. These reductions are among the most significant decreases in United States over that period of time.

We also have strengthened our efforts to end veteran homelessness. Since 2010, we have cut homelessness among Minnesota's veteran population by 50 percent. And this year, our goal of ending veteran homelessness is within reach.

Despite this progress, we still have work to do. Our updated *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* report reflects the progress that's been made and identifies new and improved strategies for alleviating homelessness.

Ensuring everyone has a safe place to live will strengthen our families and communities. Evidence shows that when Minnesotans have access to affordable housing, they do better in school, stay healthier, and are more productive at work.

Working together, we can end homelessness for every Minnesotan. I look forward to working with all of you toward that end.

Mark Dayton
Governor

AGENCY STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

Every state agency has a role to play in preventing and ending homelessness. As the members of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, we commit to the following:

Because a decent paying job is the best defense against homelessness, we will ensure that all Minnesotans have access to a career pathway, including those at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.

Because we know housing stability is vital for health, we will work to reduce the structural inequities that lead to disparities in health and housing, and continue to grow and nurture thriving, healthy communities in Minnesota.

Because improving transitions from systems of care is critical to preventing homelessness, we will ensure that everyone exiting from prison will have access to the resources and assistance they need to achieve stable housing.

Because homework makes no sense when you don't have a home, we will work with school leaders, teachers and schools to recognize their role on the front lines of preventing and ending homelessness among children and youth, so that every student can succeed and thrive.

Because we are poised to end Veteran homelessness in our state, we will achieve and sustain an end of homelessness among Veterans.

Because stable housing is the foundation for success, we will engage all partners in pursuing the goal of creating 5,000 additional housing opportunities for Minnesotans experiencing or at risk of homelessness by the end of 2020.

Because we know the impact a criminal history has on a person's ability to have financial independence and housing stability, we will explore ways to limit the use of criminal history screening for rental application and continue to enforce "Ban the Box" for employment applications.

Because families with children comprise over half of all those experiencing homelessness in Minnesota; and because children experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable, we will ensure child welfare systems are responsive to the needs of families, children, and youth; target families vulnerable to falling into homelessness; and make resources more accessible, responsive and impactful.

Because our higher education system has a unique role to play in identifying and responding to the needs of homeless youth and young adults, we will work with our K-12 and postsecondary partners to effectively support students and their families who are homeless.

Because domestic violence and homelessness are often linked, we will commit to provide staff resources over the next two years to better align Minnesota's homeless and domestic violence systems.

Because reliable transportation is necessary to maintain stable employment, access to childcare and other necessary resources, we will continue to work to increase access to transportation for those experiencing housing instability.

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Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Commissioner, Department of Education

Katie Clark Sieben, Commissioner, Department of Employment and Economic Development

Ramona Dohman, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety

Dr. Edward Ehlinger, Commissioner, Department of Health

Kevin Lindsey, Commissioner, Department of Human Rights

Emily Johnson Piper, Commissioner, Department of Human Services

Larry Pogemiller, Commissioner, Office of Higher Education

Tom Roy, Commissioner, Department of Corrections

Larry Shellito, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Affairs

Mary Tingerthal, Commissioner, Minnesota Housing

Charlie Zelle, Commissioner, Department of Transportation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preventing and ending homelessness in Minnesota is possible.

Until recently, many thought of homelessness as an intractable problem: something to lament, but reluctantly accept as a feature of modern life. Today, a growing number of communities across the country have shown that **ending** homelessness is achievable. Minnesota has contributed to this progress, with one of the largest statewide decreases (17 percent) in family homelessness in a single year between 2014 and 2015 and by cutting homelessness among Veterans in half between 2010 and 2015.

These statistics and results matter: they represent lives and communities improved, and are the result of a collective effort to use every resource, every program, and every encounter more effectively so that no Minnesotan faces the most acute form of housing instability: no place to call home.

Minnesota can, and therefore must, do better.

Despite quantifiable progress, homelessness is still a crisis for over 7,500 Minnesotans at any point in time, most of whom are children and their parents. Over 900 young people, including at least 145 minors, confront homelessness without their parent or guardian. More than 1,200 Minnesotans with disabilities have been homeless so long that they qualify as chronically homeless.

Stable housing provides a critical platform for success. Without it, children, adults, families, and communities suffer.

Minnesota has a longstanding reputation as a great place to live, get an education, work, and raise a family. Unfortunately, for the children and adults experiencing and at-risk of homelessness, this reputation does not match reality. All children need stable homes to succeed in school, develop healthy relationships with their peers and community, and eventually contribute to society as adults. All adults and families need stable homes to sustain health, employment, connection to community, and overall well-being. In short, stable housing provides a critical platform for success. Without it, children, adults, families, and communities suffer.

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, comprising the Commissioners of 11 State agencies and Governor Mark Dayton's office, is accountable for leading the State's efforts to achieve a shared vision: **housing stability for every Minnesotan.**

In December 2013, the Council issued *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, as a two-year action plan to guide the State's efforts to achieve this vision. This document is the first update to *Heading Home*; it includes revised strategies that State agencies will pursue in 2016 and 2017.

With this update, *Heading Home* is organized around eight **cross-cutting priorities** and four **population goals**. These priorities, goals, and strategies for action, are summarized in the following Plan at a Glance.

Through collaboration among all partners, Minnesota can prevent and end homelessness.

State government cannot end homelessness alone, so the plan identifies critical partnerships needed to achieve the goals. The plan aligns with *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* and with many local and regional plans in place throughout the state. It also relies and draws on the many contributions of Minnesota's strong private and nonprofit communities for ideas, resources, and ongoing support.

Ending homelessness does not mean that Minnesotans will never face housing instability or homelessness again. Rather, it means that every community in Minnesota will have a response to homelessness that **prevents** homelessness from occurring whenever possible, and ensures that when homelessness does occur, it is **rare**, **brief**, and **non-recurring**. With this critical goal in mind, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness commits to implementing the plan's strategies and actions, and looks forward to working in full partnership with all stakeholders to ensure that all Minnesotans have a place to call home.

TWO-YEAR ACTION PLAN AT A GLANCE

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness has updated and adopted *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. With key agency leaders, the Council's eleven commissioners have identified eight cross-cutting priorities and four population goals that state government will pursue over the next two years. State leaders look forward to working with local government, community, philanthropic, and private sector partners to implement these actions and ensure that all Minnesotans have a place to call home.



Cross-Cutting Priorities

1. *Housing that's Affordable*

Stable housing is out of reach for far too many Minnesotans, therefore we will work to...

- Create additional housing opportunities targeted to prevent and end homelessness.
- Target households with incomes less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

2. *Employment and Earnings*

A decent paying job is the best defense against homelessness, therefore we will work to...

- Ensure all Minnesotans have access to a career pathway by maximizing the impact of mainstream employment and training services, and building capacity of those programs that serve individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Focus on federal program changes to increase incentives to serve populations with barriers to employment.

3. *Equity in Outcomes*

Homelessness disproportionately impacts Minnesota's communities of color; American Indians; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, therefore we will work to...

- Increase the cultural agility and cultural competence of State agencies in responding to homelessness.
- Ensure Minnesota's collective efforts to end homelessness are diverse, inclusive, competent and effective.
- Make equal opportunity a practice that eradicates disparities, and ensures compliance with human and civil rights law.

4. *Streamlined and Accessible Systems and Services*

Food, health care, mental health and chemical health services, early childhood programs, transportation and childcare, must be easily accessible for people experiencing homelessness, therefore we will work to...

- Align and maximize publicly-funded health, income, transportation, and social services to help families and individuals avoid homelessness.
- Better support those who are experiencing homelessness by improving connections to services and decreasing barriers to access.

5. *Resource Coordination*

Resources must be used effectively to stably house and prevent homelessness for more Minnesotans, therefore we will work to...

- Improve grant making across homeless-specific funding streams.
- Work with local communities to implement a coordinated statewide system to provide the right services at the right time for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Coordinate homeless-specific state and federal legislative efforts.

6. *Data Quality and Analysis*

High quality data drives better planning, policy and results, therefore we will work to...

- Strengthen Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- Connect HMIS with other data sources that can guide program and policy development, research, and evaluation.

7. *Transition from Systems*

Improving transitions from systems of care is critical to preventing homelessness, therefore we will work to...

- Better coordinate and target existing resources to ensure consistency and effectiveness of transition services.
- Ensure that corrections and child welfare systems are responsive to the needs of individuals and will ensure necessary supports are in place to prevent homelessness upon exit from these systems.
- Have a strong understanding of the relationship between homelessness and discharge from systems.

8. *Engagement of Communities*

Homelessness involves many partners who must collaborate effectively to end homelessness, therefore we will work to...

- Engage with Tribal, county, regional, faith and community partners across the state to prevent and end homelessness at all levels.

Population Goals

1. Resolve and Prevent Future Veteran Homelessness

Minnesota is poised to end Veteran homelessness and the lessons learned pave the path to ending homelessness among all Minnesotans, therefore we will work to...

- Continue actively identifying Veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Sustain resources to prevent Veteran homelessness and to assist Veterans facing homelessness to rapidly connect with housing.
- Develop and apply best practices in targeting homeless prevention resources.
- Apply the lessons learned from ending Veteran homelessness to other populations.

2. End Chronic Homelessness by the end of 2017

Minnesotans experiencing chronic homelessness are among our most vulnerable people and ending chronic homelessness is both compassionate and fiscally responsible, therefore we will work to...

- End chronic homelessness in 2017, meaning that chronic homelessness is prevented wherever possible and when it occurs, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- Sustain an end to chronic homelessness, and apply the lessons learned from ending chronic homelessness to other populations.

3. Prevent and End Homelessness among Youth Unaccompanied by Parents or Guardians by the end of 2020

More than 900 young people experience homelessness in Minnesota on any given night and youth experiencing homelessness are often prey to violence and exploitation, therefore we will work to...

- End homelessness among minors unaccompanied by their parents or guardians and youth parenting their own children in 2017.
- Increase the role and impact of youth-serving systems to support young people facing homelessness.
- Better identify and support youth facing homelessness in partnership with our local delivery systems.

4. Prevent and End Homelessness among Families with Children by the end of 2020

Families with children comprise more than half of all people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. Children in these families are more vulnerable to stress, depression, exposure to violence and developmental and educational delays and parents in these families are too often victims of violence and were often homeless as children themselves, therefore we will work to...

- End homelessness among parenting youth in 2017.
- Make Minnesota's mainstream systems and prevention resources more accessible, responsive and impactful.
- Target families vulnerable to falling into homelessness.
- Better coordinate and support the identification, services and aftercare of those families who have experienced or are fleeing from violence.
- Partner with our schools to ensure every child experiencing homelessness and attending school will have help in creating a stable environment for development and learning.

For more information, please contact:

Cathy ten Broeke, State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness
Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness
651.248.5799 | cathy.tenbroeke@state.mn.us

